DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 341 806 CE 060 284

AUTHOR Richardson, John G.
TITLE Networking: Opportunities To Build Effective Extension Programs.
INSTITUTION North Carolina State Univ., Raleigh. Cooperative Extension Service.
PUB DATE 91
NOTE 25p.
PUB TYPE Viewpoints (Opinion/Position Papers, Essays, etc.) (120)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Education; *Cooperative Programs; Coordination; Demonstration Programs; *Extension Education; *Networks; *Program Development; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; Program Implementation
IDENTIFIERS North Carolina

ABSTRACT

To marshall the resources needed to deal positively with current and emerging issues, the Cooperative Extension System must use networks skillfully to establish necessary connections with other agencies and individuals. The process of developing cooperative and productive interconnections among individuals, groups, or organizations is networking. Networks are the interpersonal communication patterns that result from the process. Four primary principles must be considered in developing or functioning in networks: reciprocity, spannability, complementarity, and intentionality. Networking is a necessity to achieve any reasonable level of success or program impact. Establishment of productive networks requires development of a networking plan and compatible, mutual interests of the agencies, groups, and individuals involved. A plan for evaluating program input and success should be developed and agreed upon by all participating entities in the initial development of collaborative efforts and should be a continuing part of the overall program development and implementation process. The following are examples of networks that have been formed with the North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service as the catalytic influence in their formation and functions: (1) the Martin County experience with a network to focus on the youth problem; and (2) the New Hanover County experience in developing a network of agencies with missions related to agriculture. (17 references) (YLB)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED341806

NETWORKING:

Opportunities To Build Effective Extension Programs

John G. Richardson

North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service
and
Department of Adult and Community College Education

North Carolina State University
Raleigh, North Carolina

1991

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

J. G. Richardson

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

CE 060 284

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

NETWORKING: A MEANS FOR BUILDING EFFECTIVE EXTENSION PROGRAMS

by John G. Richardson

Introduction

Within the Cooperative Extension System today, discussions about such topics as developing networks and collaborative systems, establishing linkages, building coalitions and support systems, and networking are heard frequently when extension educational programs are being planned and discussed. These concepts are especially prominent in discussions of extension educational programs that focus on current issues and program initiatives.

Increasingly, extension educators are recognizing that the Extension Service by itself does not always possess all of the resources necessary to meet many of today's broad societal problems or many clientele needs. In a discussion on judging excellence of extension programs, Smith (1991, p.14) stated that "Extension may contribute only a portion of the totality of knowledge required for a client or situation to change. . . ." In reality, many of today's societal problems or issues are of such scope or complexity that there are a myriad of players who could be interested or involved in dealing with those issues. To marshall the resources, tangible or intangible, needed to deal positively with many of our current and emerging issues, extension educators must use networks skillfully to establish the necessary connections with other agencies and individuals.

This paper presents both a theoretical and practical perspective of networks and networking. The key principles of networking are explored as well as the reasons and means for establishing productive networks. Many extension professionals have found it difficult to evaluate the impacts of individual organizations

when those organizations work collaboratively. Therefore, some insights are presented regarding evaluation and allocation of credit. Finally, two actual examples of networking in Cooperative Extension programs are provided.

Networks and Networking

Some understanding of networks and networking is of value in analyzing the systems approach to educational programming. Often, these two words are used interchangeably, but their meanings are different. The word network is used to describe a specific form or structure, while networking reflects the action of linking individuals or systems. In the context of human systems, the process of developing cooperative and productive interconnections between individuals, groups, or organizations is networking. A network is the interpersonal communication patterns that result from the process. Thus, while a network can be seen as the design or structure, networking may be described as adding life or action to the structure (or between separate structures) to accomplish a purpose.

The next sections of this paper explore each of these important terms more completely.

Networks Defined

While the differences between networks and networking may not seem great, the network concept may be perceived very differently, depending upon the perspective of the perceiver. Although this paper focuses primarily on human collaborative linkages, some understanding that other individuals or groups may think of networks from a different perspective is useful.

While the electric company employee may think of a network as the many connections of lines that allow for the continuous flow of electricity, the extension agent is more likely to see a

network as the many people who have been a part of planning, providing resources, conducting, or otherwise assuring the success of an educational program. Both perceptions are correct, demonstrating that the term network may hold significantly different meanings depending upon its user or the context. Regardless of context, the descriptions of a network, whether human or material are quite similar.

Published writings about networks contain a vast array of descriptions that can help to explain the many contexts of its use. Jensen and Barnes (1980, p. 1) describe networks as linkages of nodes and arcs, and these authors suggest numerous applications to represent such things as inventory systems, river systems, distribution systems, flow charts, and organizational charts. In a context of World Trade Centers, a network is a worldwide electronic information and message system linking international businesses through computer systems that interconnect Trade Centers around the globe (W.T.C., 1990). To the municipal services manager, the term network "intuitively...connotes geographical distribution, namely, different places located within a certain area. These are called nodes. Nodes can be cities in a state, blocks within a city, a fire station location, etc." (Ahituv and Berman, 1988, p.2). In yet another context, the human management definition of network may be described as "a web of free-standing participants linked by one or more shared values" (Mueller, 1986, p. 136).

Governmental and business organizations have grown more complex and highly structured over the years. Writing about interpersonal interaction within these organizations, McInnis (1984, p. 9) described networks as a means by which bureaucracies may be bypassed or rendered less important. Authority becomes decentralized when individuals share pertinent information with others through interpersonal networks. McInnis describes a network as similar to a spider web; it is distinguished by "its interconnectivity, which maximizes flexibility and minimizes

vulnerability. . ." of those persons who make up a network. McInnis used the spider web analogy to describe a network as having a vast number of nodes, with the power distributed "polycentrically" so that the web can survive the destruction of a single node and retain its overall strength. A fisherman's net is another physical representation of a network and its inherent strength. Although a large fish may break many of the nodes and linking strands, the net maintains its overall integrity and is still able to catch other fish.

Whether of a human or physical nature, networks have been given many names. A brief review of the literature on networks indicates an almost limitless array of adjectives describing different types of networks. Some examples are barter, attribute, booster, dispersed, ego, positional, distribution, social, societal, transactional, similarity, and corporate (Mueller, 1986), to name only a few. The context in which a network is used, is usually reflected by its name. For example, a barter network involves the exchange of products, services, or other tangible or intangible items among individuals or groups who have formed linkages.

Although the literature provides many names for networks, the networker may choose to apply another name that is descriptive of the network that he or she has formed. Thus, in addition to having a variety of names, networks may exist in various forms; may be linked with others or stand alone; and may be formed or dismantled by those who build the network.

Networking

The art of putting action into networks requires networking. In human terms networking indicates a deliberate action on the part of an individual to form collaborative linkages with other individuals, groups, or organizations. These linkages may be

temporary and formed to satisfy only one need or may be of a longer duration and intended to meet multiple goals or needs. Persons may enter or withdraw from networks based on whether their individual goals are being satisfied. Often, the extension professional serves as a catalyst, in network building, recognizing the benefits inherent in building linkages between various entities. In this catalytic function, the agent may need to explain to the various potential network members the benefits of joining a network.

Helping others understand the advantages of joining a network to achieve a specific purpose requires leadership, energy, and imagination on the part of the extension professional. These proactive efforts have been described by Richardson (1990) as programming leadership. In carrying out this type of catalytic role, leadership attributes such as creativity, a high level of professionalism, effective communication ability, and accurate targeting of audiences are vital to ensure desired acceptance and participation by the members who will form the network.

In analyzing linkages and collaboration from a program management perspective, Favero and Heasley (1991, p. 26) mention "other program partners" in discussing the involvement of other entities in coordination of program efforts. The coordinating activities they describe can easily be construed as networking. This practical description of networking was seen as "establishing close partnerships with other agencies and organizations concerned with solving client problems." In this process, "managers exploit opportunities for sharing benefits of combined resources, benefits such as client participation, grants, and political support." In a discussion of "Ten New Directions Transforming Our Lives", Naisbitt (1984, pp. 211-229) saw networking as a means of empowering the individual and a means by which people are nurtured. In describing linkages of personal networks within and outside of organizations, Mueller (1986, p. 81) saw networking as a "new geometry or sociogram" that

"forms meaningful linkages between the life space of individuals."

Principles of Networking

In reality, humans network almost continuously as a natural function of their personal and professional lives. Some networks may be formal while others may be informal. Formal networks may be observed frequently in our more structured work environments, such as committees and task forces. Even in more structured settings, however, everyone has experienced informal interaction among group members, often in the form of discussions before or after the meeting. These interactions ultimately have an impact on the activities or decisions of the entire group.

On the personal level, we all depend on networks among friends, family members, neighbors, or others with whom we associate informally to gain information or to meet a personal need. Moreover, as described, human networks are dynamic, fluid entities that are ever changing, varying with our changing needs or goals at a given time. Organizational networks may be of longer duration than personal networks because of the perceived compatibility of the missions of respective organizations or groups, and efforts are made by those who lead the organizations to maintain these organizational linkages. A good example is the linkage between the Cooperative Extension Service and the United States Department of Agriculture's Soil Conservation Service. Yet, regardless of organizational desires, the real effectiveness of interorganizational linkages hinges on the human element. The individuals within each organization actually determine the true degree of effective linkages and cooperation.

Accomplishing desired goals or objectives and remaining in good favor among networks requires an understanding of the guiding principles of networking. Whether of short or long

duration, networking requires motivation of some type. This motivation may be administratively directed, purely personal, or of some impersonal tangible nature. Regardless of the motivation, Wells (1988, p. 9) explained that persons "may collect on debts owed for some past favor or transaction. Repayment eventually occurs, if the relationship is to continue." The WIFM (What's In It For Me) is an underlying motivation for many networkers, and this principle must be recognized in efforts to maintain productive networks.

Although the reasons for joining a network or remaining a member may vary tremendously, some reason exists in every case. Indeed, Kennard (Mueller, 1986, p. 119) stated that "networkers are already motivated or they wouldn't be in the network. . .the biggest problem networks have is how to pay the bill." In other words, when a person joins a network, what benefits does he or she expect to accrue, and who will provide those benefits? The product required for "paying the bill" should be known by the networker as the item of exchange. These items of exchange or "stuff," as Wells (1988, p. 8) described, may be tangible or intangible. In many human networks, such as those in which extension educators participate, knowledge and communication linkages among and between networks may be the primary resource or item of exchange. Other important items may be funding sources, office space, meeting facilities, personnel, or other available tangible resources.

In an analysis of networking, Wells (1988, p. 8) described four primary principles that must be considered in developing or functioning in networks. Those principles are **reciprocity**, **spannability**, **complementarity**, and **intentionality**. Each of these principles may be described as follows:

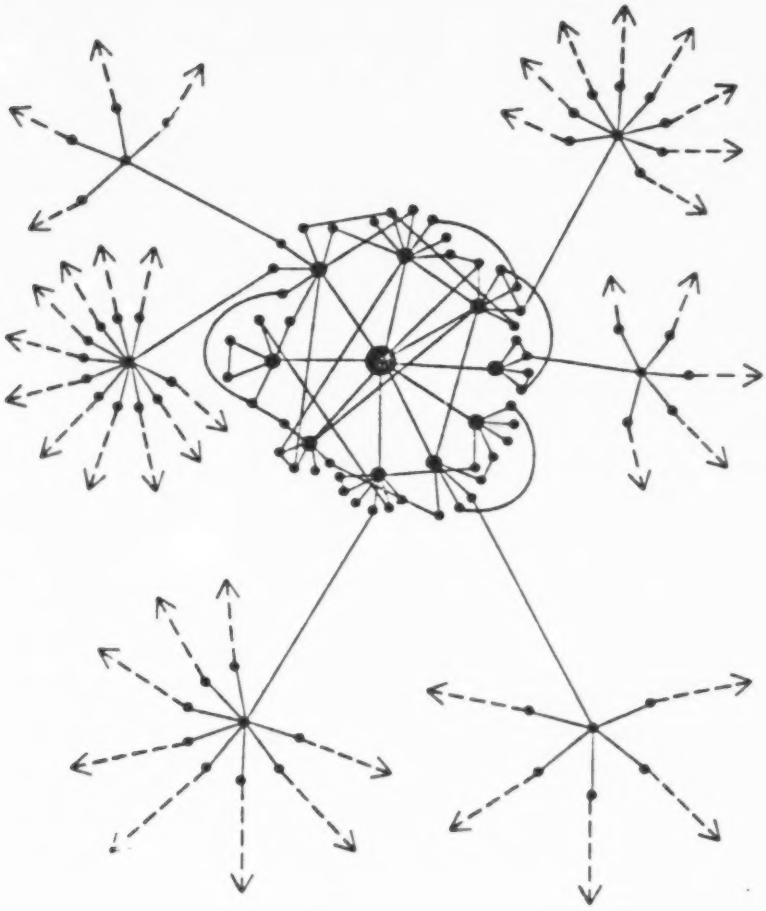
Reciprocity identifies the need for paying back in an acceptable manner others involved in a particular network. This payment is required in order to maintain a role within the functional

structure. Reciprocity may take many forms and may be quite different for each player. For example, a business may contribute personnel time as well as money to support an extension livestock show, while extension provides the leadership and develops the educational aspects of the show. In this example, the business gains recognition and goodwill throughout the community while extension gains support for its program. Examples of this type have existed over much of extension's history. Thus, whether extension needs to network for a broader knowledge base on public issues or to gain support for a livestock show, there is a long and successful history of extension workers recognizing that reciprocity is a vital component of network preservation.

Spannability represents the span of linkages that others within a specific network may have that is outside of the primary network. Within a network, there are nodes, arcs, circles, and branches (Elmaghraby, 1970, pp. 1-3). These terms describe the vast array of connections, interconnections, and offshoots of networks. The nodes represent each person within the network, and the arcs represent the connections between nodes. Within the spider web network, described previously, all nodes are connected either directly or indirectly. Yet branches of a network represent those arcs that reach beyond the perceived borders of a network. From each person (node), other persons are connected, even on the branches and far beyond the central figure of a single network (Figure 1). These connections, even if they are quite weak or quite apart from the primary network, may provide an extremely valuable resource through contacts made by one of the people in the primary network.

An example of the value of spanning between networks can be seen in the attempts of the Extension Service to broaden its audience or contact base. Extension professionals depend on someone in a known network to reach out to other personal or professional networks and thereby gain their involvement.

Figure 1. **Human Networks Diagram**



Complementarity is the process of building on our strengths and networking with others who have strengths to match our weaknesses, and vice versa. The livestock program example is a good example of this principle also, in that extension has knowledge and leadership resources but little or no money for some forms of program support. However, the business that provides financial support may be unable or unwilling to provide the capabilities that extension possesses.

Intentionality indicates a deliberate plan or design for forming or participating in a network to achieve a certain purpose. In describing power networking, Tolbert (1990, p. 41) recommended developing a "master networking plan" to accomplish desired objectives. Such a plan of intentionality may reach beyond the initial contacts or primary nodes of a network and may include others in connecting to their networks to achieve the desired purpose. Without a plan of intentionality, interface between two persons may simply result in an excellent visit with nothing more accomplished than maintenance of good will. Although good will is important, an intentional plan should be developed and implemented if specific programmatic goals are to be achieved.

Networking For Broader Program Impact

The previous discussions and examples have sought to build a framework for understanding the development of networks for extension educational programs. Networking has long been a key component of designing and conducting effective extension programs. However, traditional network partners have been rather easily identifiable and the resulting networks dependable as agencies or groups have focused on specific problems and cooperated in seeking solutions. For example, developing successful extension educational programs on drought protection may involve networking with only the Soil Conservation Service, the Federal Crop Insurance representative, local Farm Credit agencies, university specialists, and a few local agribusiness firms. Networking in extension programming today has become more demanding and complex as the focus of educational efforts has shifted to issues of broad concern and impact on society.

As we analyze past extension networking efforts in and explore current or future opportunities, it becomes clear that while we have systematically depended on individual and group contacts in our past programming efforts, those contacts may have only been a part of our normal communications within a clearly defined

network rather than a planned process of contacts designed to include non-traditional audiences or support groups in order to accomplish a specific goal or purpose. Such a goal or purpose may be to reach a broader clientele base representing wider segments of society in order to achieve desirable educational impacts.

As extension has intensified its attention and programming focus on issues such as water quality, extension professionals have found that the diversity of individuals, groups, and agencies having direct or indirect interest in these issues is extensive. As the educational outreach agency of land-grant universities, the Extension Service possesses a vast array of knowledge resources that can impact on certain issues like water quality. Even with these considerable resources, however, technical, scientific, and personnel support and expertise from other groups and agencies are needed in order to marshall a truly effective educational program on such a broad public issue. The need for such support and expertise as well as a myriad of other reasons, which may include budgetary constraints or acceptance by some clientele sectors, influence the capacity of the Extension Service and other agencies to undertake successful educational programs dealing with broad public issues.

In consideration of the resources of various entities when developing programs that focus on broad public issues, the establishment of networks is especially prudent. While continuing to use the water quality example, these networks may range from those formed to analyze the water quality situation in an area to the involvement of a wide array of interested individuals, groups, or agencies in developing and conducting educational programs on certain critical areas of water quality. Under these conditions, extension could expect to be only one among many agencies providing guidance and leadership.

In the role of catalyst or one among many, extension faces

networking of a new order rather than the former networking patterns or program cooperation, where extension was the primary agency involved, with only token input from one or two additional groups or agencies. As the single agency providing educational input, extension's programs could be planned for highly focused direction and outcomes, and the intended results were relatively easy to evaluate. As one among many, formation of networks focused on conscious collaboration in order to achieve educational objectives and sharing of the accomplishments with network partners is now a necessity to achieve any reasonable level of success or program impact.

Means for Establishing Productive Networks

Perhaps the single most important step in developing productive networks is to develop a networking plan. Formation of the plan should be preceded by needs assessments as well as collaboration with a variety of individuals and agency personnel. At this juncture, the networking plan should be developed. Normally, those individuals or groups with whom the extension worker is most closely associated and most familiar will form the nucleus of the networks, and to provide consultation regarding other dimensions to add. These primary contacts represent the initial nodes in the formation of greater networks. Efficacy of the plan will depend on the capacity of the planners to see the problem from a broad perspective and through a systems approach. This perspective is necessary in identifying apparently independent elements of a system as a whole.

In the further implementation of the plan, others who possess their own network contacts gain knowledge of the plan via the catalytic activities of the extension worker. In a description, Brazzel and Sanderson (1991, p. 5) said catalytic leaders "spin and weave cooperation, they foster agreement and trust, mediate conflict, assist communication, and create and support network structures and processes." Thus, assuming success by the agent

in the catalytic role, other network members, depending upon their interest or support, may agree to pursue other known networks for further involvement and resources. This involvement of other networks continues to open additional opportunities for program support where separate networks are linked to the primary network in the quest for obtaining the resources needed to implement an effective issues oriented program thrust.

In this context, networking seems limitless in its scope and potential, yet as with research designs, a concise statement of the problem with accompanying research design applicable to the specific problem is desirable. Therefore, the networking plan should also be concise and achievable rather than attempting to establish some far-reaching contacts that may not benefit the program and may actually be counterproductive from a time requirement perspective. These contacts made beyond individual networks may be seen as linking a large number of separate spider webs. Without the benefit of an initial plan for utilizing others within a network, however one would likely be unsuccessful in reaching those individuals or groups whom they did not know or, more explicitly, of whose existence one was even unaware.

Thus, through linking networks as needed, one can effectively tap the resources of those well beyond the linkages of the extension worker initiating or providing catalytic leadership for the plan. Such unknown or weak linkages can be useful in generating broader impact of extension educational programs when a conscious effort is made to reach beyond primary networks, and when the intended goal is clearly defined. Within the system, however, the mutual interests of the agencies, groups, or individuals must be compatible if the newly formed network is to achieve its objectives. Section II of this paper provides two actual examples of the formation of effective networks by Cooperative Extension Service agents.

Evaluating Extension's Efforts as a Part of a Network

As a standard mode of operating in the past, extension has espoused the concept of interagency, intergroup cooperation and has been most adept at providing leadership for such efforts. These efforts have produced highly positive results from which extension has benefited in gaining public and political support for its mission and programs.

As increasing emphasis is placed on involvement, sharing, cooperation, and networking among several entities, many extension workers are facing some concerns about effectively identifying their impact on the ultimate outcome of a program. Indeed, in a discussion regarding extension's shared role in providing only a portion of the total of knowledge in programs to meet today's societal needs, Smith (1991, p. 14) added support to such concerns. When clients judge the excellence of extension programs, Smith observed, they "may not be able to assess Extension's role in their decisions."

The sharing of credit for program success and acceptance of positions other than point leader on specific projects that involve many networks is often a new experience and a frustrating one for some extension workers. However, the need for personal attitudes to change as well as to adopt new approaches to broad problems is the order of the day in extension programming. As program collaborators, leadership for specific programs may rest with others, with extension performing a supportive role rather than that of leader. This supporting role can be equated to that of a quarterback on a football team; the quarterback provides significant leadership during parts of a game but is only a supporting player at other times. Thus, while extension can play a major leadership role in some networks, the role of supporter is also valuable in consideration of the needs that others may have also.

In the arena of issues programming, the sharing of credit for program success as well as the willingness to accept subordinate roles is an absolute necessity. This sharing of credit and roles may be difficult at times as extension strives to justify its programs and budgetary support as well as its degree of involvement in specific programs. This paradox must be recognized by all who administer or conduct extension educational programs as well as those who support the Extension Service.

For the extension worker who expects to achieve program results in a networking role, a plan for evaluating program inputs and success should be developed and agreed upon by all participating entities in the initial development of collaborative efforts and should be a continuing part of the overall program development and implementation process. If it is necessary to evaluate extension's specific role in collaborative issues programming, Bennett's Evaluation Model (1977) may be applicable. One simple form of evaluation is the measurement of the inputs made by extension. Others relatively easy to assess are the number of activities involving or led by extension, as well as the number of people who are reached by the programs as well as their reactions or degree of interest in the programs. However, the actual change and ultimate results of programs implemented by collaborative networks is difficult or impossible to attribute to an individual agency.

Rather than attempting to identify specific program inputs, perhaps the most effective means for evaluation and claiming of success is for all agencies or individuals involved in the initial plan development and evaluative agreement to share in evaluation and success for all rather than attempting to single out specific achievements of one entity within the collaborative system.

Regardless of the creative means by which extension chooses to claim its share of programming success, it is also important to recognize that others have also been involved as a result of motivations they hold. In the real world of networking and true issues programming involving many players, program success must be looked upon from a holistic viewpoint rather than from an individualistic approach. A holistic assessment of a program that has had multiple players from its inception may indeed command greater credibility if credit is given to all rather than allocated to individual participants.

Sharing of credit requires maturity and professionalism on the part of all collaborating partners who network to assure the success of an educational program. Yet as an agency that depends on public support for its maintenance and survival, when in a primary leadership role, extension must also protect its own interests as agreements are formed regarding program inputs, evaluation and credit for success. In protecting its interests, it is useful to recall the analogy of the football player. When playing a major role, claim major credit, and when in a minor role, allow others to claim their share of credit. A fair player will usually accept the rules of networking regarding reciprocity and will willingly assess his or her level of participation and the amount of credit to claim. The rules of fair play may be broken only if one is willing to destroy future collaborative opportunities. Most extension professionals understand these rules quite well, but concerns arise when others appear to misunderstand or subvert the rules of fair play.

Summary

Whether extension is the initiator and anchor of a collaborative network or only a member, the process of collaboration provides many opportunities to reach far beyond our known personal sphere of interaction. Effective analysis and planning provide opportunities for the extension professional to become involved

in productive networks. This involvement, called networking, may reach into resources that would otherwise be impossible to obtain through established channels.

As educational programs are developed that seek to impact on issues of broad public concern, the widening scope of such initiatives precludes the possibility of problems being solved by extension alone. Therefore, the planned, prudent involvement of others and utilization of multiple agency resources is a prerequisite to achieving the desired overall impact.

Developing a plan of action in collaboration with other individuals or agencies through effective networking is the primary approach in dealing effectively with many of today's societal needs. Cooperative Extension, as a proactive educational agency can provide leadership in structuring and nurturing networks whereby effective educational thrusts are directed toward meeting those needs. In following through with this responsibility, sharing of credit for program successes must also be accepting as a key component.

The following section presents two examples of actual networks that have been formed with the Cooperative Extension Service as the catalytic influence both in their formation and functions.

SECTION II
EXAMPLES OF NETWORKING BY COOPERATIVE EXTENSION AGENTS

The Martin County Experience

To address the seeming lack of concern among adults regarding youth problems in Martin County, the Extension 4-H agent analyzed statistics of school-age youth and found that nearly one-half lived in poverty. Family resources were extremely

limited, and a large number of the parents were illiterate. These conditions appeared to be contributing to an inordinate number of youth being placed in detention centers. Adults were generally observed to demonstrate a lack of concern about youth problems such as substance abuse, dropping out of school, poor health and nutrition, poor performance in school, and juvenile crime.

Recognizing that an effective youth development problem must be far reaching and therefore beyond the resources of any single agency, the agent began the process of developing a network of persons and agencies to focus collectively on the youth problem. The agent first identified potential members of a perceived viable network and made contact with those individuals. From the agent's perspective, the initial function of the network was seen as attracting and making use of all resources offered through the initial contacts.

The agent found that industries located in the county could provide helpful advice. Their input provided an excellent picture of future employment needs and the types of individuals that can fill those needs. Civic clubs that had youth programs were contacted and offered verbal support needed to legitimize the formation of a network.

Seed money to begin planning educational programs was provided by the Community Based Alternatives Youth Advisory Committee of Martin County. Their primary interest is with children in the Juvenile Justice System.

To give the developing network direction, the extension strategic planning process was implemented, involving all interested extension volunteers. These volunteers who represented the various program areas of extension, recommended that 4-H should provide the primary leadership for the network. The initial educational program selected to be undertaken by the network was

to sponsor a "State of the Child" conference that would focus on youth issues. The conference objectives would include areas that would involve all interested individuals and agencies in a plan that would function over a four-year period to improve the state of children in Martin County.

In Martin County, there is an Interagency Council made up of all county agencies. The network and the "State of the Child Conference" plan were presented to the council to obtain its sanction for the project. As the sanctioning body for interagency projects, the council would be given complete control of the network and the conference. The Interagency Council adopted the network; the Martin County School System, Health Department, and Cooperative Extension Service were chosen to co-chair the "State of the Child Conference." Other youth service agencies involved in the network and the conference included the Martin County Department of Social Services, Tideland Mental Health, CBA Youth Advisory Committee, Martin Community College, and the Martin County United Way.

The Martin County Cooperative Extension Service 4-H agent reported on the project to the county commissioners, who were asked to support the efforts and program of the network. The commissioners agreed to support the project and to allow agency heads to proceed as they thought appropriate, working with the network.

The three lead agencies then began a publicity campaign, inviting all interested individuals, agencies, and organizations to an organizational meeting. At the meeting, plans for the cooperative educational effort were explained, and an open invitation was given to all who wished to volunteer for committee assignments on the "State of the Child Conference." Thirty-five persons representing all of the county's major agencies, towns, and racial groups volunteered to work on the conference.

As of this writing (summer 1991), the agent indicates that through committee work the conference plans are developing quite well (Butler, 1991). Eight major issues have been identified to be addressed at the conference in the spring of 1992. School teachers will receive certificate renewal credit for attending the conference, and all youth workers in county agencies are being given time to attend.

Industries that gave advice are being asked to support the conference financially by providing scholarships that will allow parents in their work force to attend. Civic clubs are also being approached for support money.

The agent indicates that the network is working as a result of the common desire of those involved to improve the lives of children in Martin County. Some groups value the program as a chance to publicize successful programs; some like the publicity to help garner more resources; and others are participating to carry out their civic responsibilities. For whatever reason persons or organizations are participating, the extension agent states that "this network is working."

THE NEW HANOVER COUNTY EXPERIENCE

As an urban coastal county, New Hanover County has little commercial row crop and animal production. However, its ornamental and turf enterprises are significant, as are its rather extensive vegetable enterprises. Timberland covers about 25,000 acres, and a vast number of urban tree plantings blanket the landscape.

Upon arrival in the county, the new county extension director sought to identify all agencies having responsibilities for some

component of agricultural programs. Interestingly enough, the yellow pages of the local telephone book were consulted in the initial stage of the search.

The primary purpose for this search was to attempt to develop a network of agencies having different missions but holding some common identifiable thread related to agriculture. This network was perceived to be an excellent means for combining resources to focus on broader issues beyond the confines of individual agencies as well as to establish open channels of collaboration and cooperation.

As the new extension director visited with the eight agencies with which he was familiar, other agencies were identified. Individuals within the various agencies became aware of the developing network, and ultimately 17 agencies joined the network.

After the various agencies had embraced the concept of a collaborative network, a special "Agency Get Together" was developed for agency leaders. At this conference, each agency shared its specific mission and the issues it regarded as most pressing. This initial conference was an acclaimed success and has produced highly positive continuing results. Agencies leaders now readily recognize where to find the expertise needed to address individual clientele and community problems. Without hesitation, the problem is referred to the agency that can be of greatest assistance. Thus, while the initial goal was awareness and collaboration, the cooperative spirit engendered through this network is resulting in prompt and accurate referrals, impacting positively on issues that are beyond the dimension of a single agency (Ricks, 1991).

Those agencies identified as having missions related in some way to agriculture include the Cooperative Extension Service; Wildlife Resources Commission; Soil Conservation Service;

Department of and Environment and Natural Resources; Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service; Animal, Plant, and Health Inspection Service; Division of Marine Fisheries; Division of Shell Fish; Forest Service; County Health Department; N.C. Aquarium; Carolina Beach State Park; Army Corps of Engineers; Sea Grant; and three autonomous units of the N.C. Department of Agriculture. Other nearby county extension directors have also joined the network.

REFERENCES

Ahituv, N., and O. Berman. 1988. Operations Management of Distributed Service Networks. Plenum Press, New York.

Bennett, C. 1977. Analyzing Impacts of Extension Programs. Extension Service/USDA ECS-575. Washington, D. C.

Brazzel, M., and D. Sanderson. 1991. Managing Cooperation. The North Carolina Agricultural Extension Service, Raleigh.

Butler, D. 1991. Personal interview conducted in Raleigh, North Carolina.

Elmaghraby, S. E. 1970. Some Network Models in Management Science. Springer-Verlag, Berlin.

Favero, P., and D. Heasley. 1991. Managing Innovative Programs. Journal of Extension, Vol. 29.

Jensen, P. A., and J. Barnes. 1980. Network Flow Programming. John Wiley, New York.

Kennard, B. 1982. from Mueller, R. K. 1986. Corporate Networking. Free Press, New York.

McInnis, N. 1984. Networking. The Futurist, June.

Mueller, R. K. 1986. Corporate Networking. Free Press, New York.

Naisbitt, J. 1984. Megatrends. Warner Books, New York.

Ricks, P. 1991. Personal interview conducted in Wilmington, North Carolina.

REFERENCES (Continued)

Richardson, J. G. 1990. Leadership-A Key to Programming Success. Agricultural Extension Service, Raleigh, N.C.

Smith, M. F. 1991. Criteria for Judging Excellence. Journal of Extension, Vol. 29.

Tolbert, B. 1990. Power Networking for Community College Teachers. Community College Review, Vol. 18, No.1.

Wells, B. 1988. Working with Groups and Organizations. Module 5 of the Working With Our Publics series, E. J. Boone, project director. North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

World Trade Center. 1990. Network.

Author: Dr. John G. Richardson, Extension Specialist, Educational Programs, North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service, and Associate Professor, Department of Adult and Community College Education, North Carolina State University, Raleigh.

*A concept paper prepared for use as a resource for North Carolina Cooperative Extension Service in-service training and other extension programming needs, 1991.